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Anarcho-pacifism

Harold Barclay

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Anarcho-pacifists hold that anarchism is a philosophy of non-violence, arguing that since anarchism opposes all domination, it cannot endorse the worst form of domination, which is violence upon another person. While pacifism remains a minority position among anarchists, anarcho-pacifists have considerably influenced other anarchists in their emphasis on non-violent civil disobedience as a means of protest.

Perhaps a majority of anarcho-pacifists are Christians, basing their belief on the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5–7). The most famous was Leo Tolstoy, who, via his influence on Gandhi, is among the most influential of anarchists. The earliest Christian anarcho-pacifist was probably Adin Ballou (1803–90). Later Christian anarchists include Russian existentialist philosopher Nikolai Berdyaev (1874–1948) and French theologian Jacques Ellul (1911–94).

A few Christian sects might be placed in this category as well, although none would appreciate being called anarchist. The conservative Anabaptist sects such as the Old Order Amish and the Hutterites believe there are two kingdoms: that of the world, represented by the state and violence, with which no Christian may be associated, and the kingdom of God, repre-

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sented by the church as a holy community living according to the New Testament. Accordingly, they have always resisted state interference in their lives. A group of Russian origin bearing some similarities to the Society of Friends (Quakers) is the Doukhobors, within which the Sons of Freedom subsect has, at least until recent times, been very militant in its opposition to state attempts to direct their lives. Catholic Worker is another Christian anarcho-pacifist organization.

Apart from religious anarcho-pacifists, there are also those who consider themselves secular, most of whom reject religion. Many base their pacifism and anarchism on the innateness of the principle of mutual aid. Gustav Landauer (1870–1919), Bart De Ligt (1883–1938), and Paul Goodman (1911–72) are examples of secular anarcho-pacifists.

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